THE UNITS OF INVESTIGATION

IN THE

SOCIAL SCIENCES.

BY

ARTHUR FISHER BENTLEY.

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The opposition between the individual and society which, on the practical side of human interest is as old as man's history, has shown itself in recent years on the side of pure science to be equally sharp and apparently equally irreconcilable. When it became evident that Hobbes' primitive individual with his redundant independence was but a fiction of the thinker's brain; and when it was seen that Sir James Mackintosh's dictum about the constitutions, that they "are not made but grow," must be applied as well in all other fields of social phenomena, the students of society were not satisfied with tempering the old theories to bring them in accord with the real facts of human nature. They rushed to the other extreme and set up as their entity, as their unit of investigation, "Society" itself, in opposition to the too presumptuous theories that based on the independent individual. Thenceforward all explanations of the phenomena of social life must be in terms of the social organism. We learned that it was the "will of society" that declared war; that it was the "social soul" that decided what was right and what was wrong for the citizen. Finally, we have theories that show how the social organism itself estimates the values of goods as they appear in the markets; and others that attempt to trace the course of religions almost as if they were real beings with vital principles of independent growth.

Now without having reference to the concrete content of any of these theories, we cannot avoid feeling that as far as they are expressed directly in terms of the social organism, they are rather to be looked upon as statements of the problems to be solved than as themselves solutions. When we are told that "society does so and so," we are given rather a description than an explanation of the phenomena.

The social organism is not one of those units of experience or hypotheses from which our reasoning can set out.

With these facts borne in mind we may begin a consideration which will discover to us if possible what those facts are which must be taken as our units of investigation if we wish to understand the meaning of such phrases as those given above.

First of all it is necessary to point out that very few sciences are able to take as their units of investigation, elements which they are satisfied to regard as themselves irreducible. The biologist, for example, must accept protoplasm as a definite fact, behind which, for the present at any rate, he is unable to go. Much as he desires to explain the life phenomena connected with it, in terms of physics and chemistry, and many attempts as he has made in this direction, he is baffled, and must begin his reasonings just with life itself. There is a gap there which his interpretation of nature cannot cross. The psychologist busies himself with the interpretation of the nature and development of man's psychical activities, but whatever theories he may cherish as to the connection between the soul-life and the nervous system, there is much in the former that he must simply take as it is given and reason with as best he may.

The failure to realize this, the attempt to force an explanation of the more complex phenomena in terms of the simplest forces, and the transplanting of laws and methods found satisfactory in one of these separated spheres of investigation straightway to another, all lead to what Professor Patten has well called the "scientific bias" of investigation, and bring in the end confusion instead of knowledge.

When we turn our attention to the social sciences we are inclined to say at once that what they treat of is man and his life in society, but if we should take simply individual men as the units for our investigation and confine our attention to the direct interactions of one man with another, we

would soon meet with very great difficulties. We would find in the first place that we had omitted certain elements of very great importance for the interpretation of social phenomena, prominent among which is the physical environment within which the men are located. Then we would be embarrassed by the fact that man is himself a variable factor, great changes being produced in him by the very phenomena under consideration; and an understanding of the reactions of the social life on the individual would be vital to an understanding of the social life itself.

It is nevertheless true, and in a deeper sense than a cursory thought would indicate, that the human mind is the central point for all study of social phenomena; though our next observation may seem to tend to a very different conclusion. For we must remember that the material that is empirically given us in society to investigate is first of all, simply motion; regular and irregular, temporary and permanent changes of situation in both men and things. Motives, desires, feelings, ideals, and all the other elements that go to make up a conscious personality are not direct objects of investigation for the student of society. Directly they concern only the psychologist. Society itself is rather a nexus of *actions;* and it is a nexus so complex that were the investigator himself of other nature than human, its interpretation would be utterly impossible.

Fortunately we, coming as men to interpret the actions of other men, are in better state. Gifted by inheritance and accustomed by early training and by long practice on ourselves and on others, in the little matters of daily life as in the greater happenings, we are able to interpret the actions of others in terms of the content of our own consciousness. We read into the lives of others motives and feelings akin to those which we ourselves possess, and can thus use the conclusions of psychology to explain the phenomena that would otherwise baffle us.

This process of interpreting physical phenomena in terms

of psychic elements must be recognized as fundamental to any attempt to understand society; and, indeed, it is so universally employed as to make it seem commonplace in statement. It is a much more common error to consider the phenomena to be explained themselves psychical, than to assert their causes to be physical.

It is true that as far as our experience of live, socially active human beings is concerned the two kinds of phenomena are never separate; or, better said, the physical man always shows signs of those co-ordinated activities, which we interpret as involving the presence of what we call the *psyche*. The fact is better stated in this latter form, because what one man observes in other men is of necessity only the physical, the outer series; it is in himself alone that he can attend both to inner and to outer series.

In order to find a firm basis for our interpretation from psychical to physical, we are forced now to further consideration of the relation existing between the two series. It is evident that no thought on this subject can start except from hypothesis. One possible assumption is that mind and matter are two entirely disparate substances, and that the former is able directly to exert influence on the latter. By such an assumption, however, an unknown and indeterminable element, mind, is introduced into our reasonings, and that means the sacrifice of all hope of scientific explanation of society. Opposed to this is the usual hypothesis of nearly all modern philosophy and science, that the two series, the physical and the psychical, correspond to one another throughout. We will make here the ordinary scientific assumption that the two series are simply different aspects of the same substance; put in plain words that means for us simply that mind has its laws as does matter, and that, in human beings at least, the phenomena of one regularly accompany the phenomena of the other.

When it was said above that physical phenomena were to be interpreted in terms of psychic elements, it was not

meant to imply that one series influenced or caused the other. The meaning was that where our ability to follow the physical or sense-series ceases on account of its complexity, there we must interpolate, according to our daily custom, and with the aid of psychology, such elements drawn from our own consciousness as experience has shown to be most satisfactory in explanation.

Let us look for a moment at the physical series. Every motion or action implies of necessity an environment within which it occurs. There can be no change of place without reference of the thing changed to the other things which constitute its environment. There are however certain portions of the environment which stand in a more intimate relation to the given object; for the movement of the object is always directly referrible to some preceding movement in a portion of its environment, and it will always be followed sooner or later by other movements in the environment. This is nothing more than the general principle of causation. It must, however, not be forgotten that these objects of the empirical world which so react and are reacted upon are themselves of complicated nature, having individual characteristics due to previous processes of physical, chemical or vital character. Each possesses its specific way of reacting and of causing reactions. The same blow or strain applied to a steel rod, or to a stick of glass or of wood, will have very different effects in the different cases. The jackass and the cat have very different reactions when placed in a patch of thistles. Even different men vary greatly in their response to the same stimulus, indicating thus the specifically varying character of their organisms.

Each of those actions, then, which taken together make up what we call the social phenomena, may be looked at from two directions. It may be considered first from the position of what we call the actor, and second from the position of the environment, or that which has been acted upon.

Let us now turn from the physical to the psychical aspect

of the phenomena. As has been shown above the attempt to explain the physical processes of society by means of psychical elements rests upon the hypothesis that the two series correspond to one another throughout. It is true that immediate physical reaction with the environment, of a kind which has never appeared directly in the consciousness of the organism, is responsible for very much of the physical evolution of the human being. The study of these reactions falls however rather to biology than to sociology. Man as the result of these reactions is a primary assumption of the sociologist. It is true, further, that many of the actions of an individual man living under social relations, are reflex, and consequently do not appear in the corporate consciousness of the individual. Their corresponding psychic side, if existent at all, must be located in the lower, sub-cortical centres. Such actions are however in nearly every case strictly personal ones and without importance for the study of social phenomena. The statement will therefore hardly find contradiction that all the human actions which the sociologist is called upon to consider have their correlates in consciousness.

Since, then, we have found on the physical side that all the phenomena of movement can be looked at from two standpoints, which have been indicated by the opposition of actor and environment, we would naturally expect a similar relationship on the psychical side. And indeed we can make such an analysis in thought; it is the relationship of subject and object itself. We waive the speculation, which fortunately does not concern us here, as to whether this relation is also found in the inorganic world; the physicist does not use it, finding that interpretation in terms of the physical series is sufficient for all his needs. It is just in the phenomena of human life that the relationship is universally admitted to exist. Subject and object are the results of the very first analysis of what we call the psychic, and one of them is inconceivable without the other.

We must now carry farther the analogy between actor and environment, or cause and effect, on one side, and subject and object on the other. If we consider for itself the simplest psychic state which we can find—a pure sensation, whether pleasurable, painful or indifferent in tone—it is probably correct to say that it is just "a piece of naive experience" with neither subject nor object about it. But enough "philosophizing" has been done by every adult, even of the lowest savage tribe, to give him this analysis into subject and object; and the distinction, once made, becomes a tremendously important thing. The man as subject feels, and he feels with reference to an outside world. This process of "localization" may be very vague indeed as where a slight disturbance is located in general among the viscera; or it may be very precise, as is the ordinary man's idea of place of things seen. Among adult members of society, it is, however, always present.

Now just as man on the physical side is a living and "going" organism with his own peculiar modes of reaction, so he is to be considered on the psychical side. The adult man has a great store of experience, and this determines the specific modes of his psychic reaction. The combination of a physical stimulus with his nervous structure, resulting in action, and the combination of a sensation with his ideas, resulting in a new state of consciousness, are simultaneous. It is on the basis of these propositions, resulting as they do from our preliminary hypothesis of the relation between matter and mind, that we get our justification for explaining the physical phenomena of society in terms of psychic elements. Instead of attempting to interpret the actions of men by brain states, of which in the very nature of the phenomena we can know nothing, we use directly the concomitant psychic states, the desires, feelings and ideas, and interpret the actions through them. Empirically we have seen this method of explanation to be unavoidable; and the hypothesis from which we have set out is the only one which

will enable us to take advantage of it, and yet keep within the limits of scientific work.

Now it is so clear as hardly to need statement that the analysis between subject and object is possible only for an individual consciousness. One's own subjectivity is the one absolutely unique fact of his life. In assuming for each individual man a psychic life, that is an individual subjectivity, we assume for him at the same time the corresponding object series to which his subject refers. This object series will vary greatly for men at different stages in racial evolution. It will differ for two men under the same circumstances; and it will even differ for the same man at different periods in his intellectual development. If then we are to interpret the individual's actions by means of his assumed subjective states, we must understand and interpret these with reference to the particular individual object series to which they refer, as far as we can determine it, and not with reference to our own, or to some assumed "racial" or "social" object series. If the elements on which we base the explanation of society are to be the states of feeling and knowing of the individual subject, they must have opposed to them the content felt and known by him at the time, rather than that content of better tested knowledge which the race has accrued, and which we are accustomed to call the "real" physical world. This may seem rather a verbal quibble. It has, however, its importance in the consideration of the complicated phenomena of society, and we shall be careful throughout to name the elements that we may find, rather in terms of subject and object than of physical forces.

The postulation of these mutual interactions of the phenomena in the psychical as well as in the physical series, must not be thought to be derogatory in any way to the power of initiative which manifestly resides in all living beings. Rather it directly presupposes it. Just as protoplasm becomes a store of energy, and as the different organisms all have their characteristic acquired modes of reaction,

so there is for each being its characteristic psychic condition and initiative. And though we can ultimately reduce the "going" and originating power of protoplasm to reaction of units of matter with the environment—as it has been suggested, for example, in the case of the simplest unicellular organisms, to the effect of moisture and light on the surface of the cell—this does not in the slightest degree do detriment to the fact that in the organisms as we find them, the specifically characteristic activities and "psychologies" are present.

Admitting the necessity of a psychologic interpretation of all social phenomena, and recognizing that just as every action is only conceivable with reference to an environment, so every psychic state whether feeling or thought or impulse, is inextricably bound up with an "object," either of the past or of the present, to which it can be referred, we are in a position to begin the consideration of those elements which must be made the units of investigation in any causal interpretation of social phenomena.

The elements divide themselves as has been indicated, first of all, into the two general classes of the men who know, feel, and act, and that content which presents itself from one point of view as that which is known or felt, from the other as that which is a cause of action. Any individual man, as we find him, has certain characteristic ways of reacting on the various stimuli that are presented to him. The sum of these forms of reactions, considered from the subjective side, constitute what we call his personality, and distinguish him from other individuals. The sensations which present themselves to him from without, combine themselves as they come, into percepts or objects. To these he responds in accordance with his accumulated store of ideas, or psychic personality, as above described.

These objects group themselves primarily into other human beings, and a physical nature, which latter phrase must be understood to include brute and vegetal life as well as

inorganic phenomena. It must not be left out of account that man is a "going" organism; and that what both immediate sense stimuli and his store of accumulated experience or personal knowledge really do for him is to control the direction of his actions. Consequently he sometimes seems to be acting entirely under the influence of immediate sensations; sometimes entirely under the influence of inward states or ideas. In reality both elements are concerned in all his actions. The actions brought about largely by inward states or ideas become exceedingly complex. It is on them almost entirely that social life depends, and it is on account of their complexity that we are forced to the psychic interpretation of the social phenomena.

In classifying the units of investigation in the social sciences we do not need to do it from the standpoint of the individual man in society. It will suffice if we remark that the actions of each individual with reference to his neighbors are governed by what he expects them to do rather than by what they actually will do, as to which latter the individual man has of course no means of being certain in advance. The classification can then be made from an external standpoint.

The units of investigation then, as far as they have been yet mentioned, include the knowing and acting men, and the known environment of physical nature within which they are placed. With the latter we have in this paper little concern. It consists always of certain concrete conditions; and, as has been repeatedly said, is to be brought into consideration only in so far as it is known to the members of the society. In low societies the influence of this environment while of the greatest importance, is simple and largely a matter of immediate experience. The conditions of climate, the dangers that are encountered, the food supply that is within reach, are all reacted upon directly and have their great effect in social development. In an advanced type of society where a great mass of knowledge has been

acquired by the summed up labors of many generations of men, and where the various parts of the external world are understood in their relations to one another, the environment is exploited to a much higher degree for the benefit of the individuals. Nature is here under the control of man, and the individual's reactions with it are in the main not direct but meditated through the organization of society, and through the whole mass of accrued appliances and social knowledge.

Passing now from the physical environment to the human beings who react in connection with it, it is next necessary to classify the various psychical elements with reference to the forms which they assume under social conditions. For the sociologist the fundamental fact of the psychic life of man is that he is a creature with wants. The term wants may be understood to include the content of all those motives which lead to action with which the sociologist is concerned; there are, of course, many other wants leading to actions which have no import for society. We may distinguish in general between the deep-seated and permanent needs of the organism, and its temporary and fluctuating desires; but it is not the purpose of this paper to concern itself at all with the classification of concrete wants. While such classification is of the utmost importance for the interpretation of specific social problems, it will not aid to discover the general types of elements with which one must always reckon. We must seek rather for the specifically different psychical forms in which the wants, and the psychic processes connected with their satisfaction, express themselves. We will find, in general, three such forms which are of importance to the sociologist. The simplest of these is impulse, which is correlated with impulsive action. It is an immediate yielding to the first best desire that comes along.

We may define *impulse* accordingly as the psychic analogue of the simplest form of want satisfying activity; remembering of course that with the increasing complexity of psychic

life, and the consequent conflict of impulses, there will be many impulses which will be conquered by stronger ones, and so which never appear directly in action. In the lower animals the form of much of the activity from birth onward is instinctive, by which is meant simply an inherited form of reaction on the world; but in the human being instinct plays such a minor rôle, being replaced almost entirely by imitation and acquired experience after birth, that we do not need to take it into account for our purposes.

Simple impulsive actions being random and indefinite are themselves of little importance for the sociologist, and in the vast majority of persons in a modern civilized community they occur mainly in connection with the trifling personal functions of every day life. In place of them we find the co-ordinated actions governed either by custom or by "enlightened egoism." It is next necessary to trace briefly the steps in this co-ordination of impulses into customs on the one side and into "competition" or conscious calculation on the other.*

Even in an isolated individual there would arise very quickly *habits* of reaction, owing on the mental side to his distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful methods of attempting to satisfy his wants; and on the physical to the tendency to repetition of past actions, the energy of the individual being drained off along the lines of least resistance. In a group of individuals living under the same physical surroundings, there would naturally be many habits individually formed which would correspond in all the members of the group. Recent investigations† have greatly emphasized the importance for the understanding of the evolution of mind, of the imitative tendency in all its various stages from physiological repetition to conscious and

*Professor Patten has elaborated the distinction between actions determined by "feeling" and those determined by "reasoning" in several of his recent writings. See especially "The Scope of Political Economy," *Yale Review*, November, 1893 p. 279.

†Compare, for example, J. Mark Baldwin, "Mental Development in the Child and the Race," New York, 1895.

volitional reproduction; and this factor alone would be sufficient to ensure a great multiplication of the number of habits of action common to most or all the members of the group. Habits of quite complicated character would be passed both from parents and from other adults to the children, as well as from adult to adult.

In this approximation of the habits of many people to one another we have the rudiments of *customary action*, a phenomenon of such transcendent importance for the interpretation of many civilizations, and of the widest influence even in the Western civilization of to-day. Imitation, important as it is, can however explain to us by no means all of the phenomena of social custom. As a correlative to the attempt both of children and of adults to acquire consciously and volitionally some social habit or custom, there may go the attempt on the part of the more adept to impart or teach it. The custom thus comes to be looked upon objectively from both sides. It is referred to the whole group as something which everyone does, and no longer regarded as a simple property of the individual. When it is learned or taught it is looked upon as something to be valued for its own sake. In the characteristic way peculiar to the human species, the means has been raised up and is treated as an end in itself.

But this is not all. After the custom has become comparatively fixed and rigid, the physical environment, or the corresponding wants of the group, may undergo some change, so as to destroy to a greater or less extent the purposefulness of the custom. It will not readily yield and remains a monument of past conditions. It becomes then regarded all the more as objective and independent. The more intelligent of the people may see its undesirability, and wish to disregard it, but lack of energy and fear of their less facile fellows will keep them true to the old observance. Again, in the course of time and with a changing environment, the custom may come to affect an entirely different

part of the life activity from that which it originally concerned: and this is still another element tending to cause people to look upon it as an objective fact with which they must reckon.

Now in order that these customs be looked on as objective by the individual members of the group in which they are found, a considerable degree of intellectual development is required. The individual must have consciously reflected on the surroundings of his life and be able to reason about them. It is just this characteristic which marks the sharp difference between the actions of the hive-bees and those of the members of even the most savage group of human beings. It will hardly be said that the worker bee consciously reflects on his life and its conditions, and acts accordingly. The bee simply acts as his instincts have led him, and all is well. The man reflects as he lives. It is not intended to claim that in races under the full sway of primitive custom, there is very much conscious reflection of this particular kind, but simply that in an occasional individual the germs of it are found, and that the farther the tribe has developed, the more important such reflection becomes.

We have seen that many of the impulses and habits of the individuals become co-ordinated in social life in the form of custom. There remains, however, a large part of their activity which does not become so regulated but continues in the impulsive form. It is probably here that the material is to be found from which free volitional action and conscious calculation of utilities is developed. The occasion of such action would be, as has been already indicated, the conflict of two or three impulses of which it was possible to choose only one. A utility scale would gradually be formed in accordance with which choices would be made. The portion of the activities of the individual in connection with which such conscious calculations are made, would be gradually enlarged; but it is evident that only that can be weighed and estimated which is of the nature of a content of knowledge; and this

agrees thoroughly with our general theorem of the importance of the opposition of subject and object, in selecting our units of investigation.

We may now pause for a moment to consider what elements on which to base our reasoning about social phenomena, have been thus far disclosed, and what are their relations to one another. These elements are individual men as acting (1) on impulse, (2) unreflectingly, in accordance with custom, or (3) with conscious calculation. Their actions are governed with respect to their environment, which consists, for all their calculated actions, at least, of their knowledge and experience of (*a*) nature, (*b*) their fellow-men as individuals, and (*c*) social customs.

In making thus social custom, as we find it objectified in the mind of the individual, one of the units for reasoning, it is by no means meant that custom is any material or tangible phenomenon. The ridiculousness of such a position is apparent enough. On the other hand more is meant than that it is simply an abstraction made by the student to help him in his scientific studies. Custom must be understood as objectified in the minds of the very people among whom it is found, and as helping to regulate their actions. True, in low, custom-bound societies there may be very few who do more than imitate, very few who consciously take custom into account in the way we have specified. Nevertheless there are some who do it, and whose lives are greatly affected thereby; and it is these very individuals who bear with them the seeds of social change, and whose natures it is thus of the most importance for the sociologist to understand.

The elements thus far enumerated are clearly insufficient to account for many of the highly complicated phenomena which we find in modern social life. We have however already attained the main principles on which their classification must be based: so instead of trying to follow further the general course of social development, we may descend at

once into the midst of affairs as our present society shows them.

First of all our attention is called to the fact that the physical environment to be considered is no longer simple unmodified nature. By the actions of many generations of men, climates have been changed, lands reclaimed, harbors made, and a thousand other changes brought about in the country inhabited. We must take all these things as we find them now if we would understand society rightly. Further than this, a modern society possesses a great store of material goods which have already been fitted for human use, or are on their way toward that goal. These form a vantage point for further progress. These material elements admit only of concrete classification, and, as before, we can pass over them at once to the distinctively human elements.

It will be remembered that the chief characteristic of custom is that it is a form of action which is shared in alike by all, or, at least, by the great majority of the members of the group in question. Undoubtedly the chief form of custom which we have to mention is the language of the society. In its earlier forms, spoken language will be found to answer very exactly to customary action as it has been described above. Under custom may also be classed simple religious beliefs, and even simple ceremony, as far as it has not taken on a type of organization characterized by formal division of labor.

Unfortunately the word custom is liable to be understood in several different ways. It may mean first of all, on the physical side, the habitual mode of reaction which is the same in all of the individuals of the group. This we have been distinguishing by the phrase "customary action" instead of by the simple word custom. But it may also refer subjectively to the characteristic of the individual in making such response to stimulus: or finally it may mean the objectified mass of custom as it presents itself to the

reflecting individual: in other words, the abstraction, custom. Customs in this last sense are the *products* of the social interaction of men, as recognized in the individual brain. Now there will be found certain other elements in the knowledge of the individual about society, which differ in certain respects from customs, and which are even more important as regulators of his conduct. These bear in general the mark that they involve differentiation of function on the part of the individuals: and they are often classed together with customs under the general phrase "social structure." Here belong, for example, all institutions, and the whole social organization of individual activities. The general characteristics of any particular civilization are often summed up by reference to these things—its laws and institutions, customs and beliefs. There is apparently no distinctive English word for this class of phenomena, and as it is essential for the sake of clearness of reasoning to have them specifically named, we may perhaps adopt from another science the word "formation" for this purpose. *Formation* then may be used to designate any portion of what is often called the "social structure," whatever its origin, which may be objectified by the individual and made the norm or basis of his action.

Prominent among the social formations is the state, or rather the constitution of the state, if that word can be used in such a broad sense as to make it include the form of organization of all the political activities of that part of the citizenship which is concerned in any way whatever with the carrying on of the state functions. Again the whole religious organization with its related institutions forms a good example of a social formation, or rather of a complex of such formations. Here also are to be ranged such institutions as marriage and the family, the school and the university, and benevolent organizations. The industrial organization of a modern society is a complex of such formations, among which may be mentioned the phenomena of exchange, credit,

currency, the transportation system, boards of trade, banks, the telegraph, and business law.

Objection may perhaps be brought that these "social formations" are really nothing more than modes of interaction of men living in the society of one another, and that abstraction of them does not make them elements of reasoning, but rather phenomena to be explained; and it may be said further that the explanation can be given completely in terms of the individual men who are members of the society in which the phenomena occur. The first of these points is readily admitted, but the second and third imply misunderstanding of the whole course of our argument. It has been a fundamental assumption from the very beginning of this paper that the actions of men, which are the phenomenal content of sociology, are so complex that they can be explained only in terms of the psychic lives of those men. Further it has been assumed that the psychic factors can only be understood in connection with that objective world which is in its simplest phases the occasion of their feeling, and in its most complex manifestations the content of their knowledge. If now it can be shown that the psychic states and consequently the actions of an individual living in a society are governed as much by his knowledge and ideas of what we have called formations, as by his knowledge and experience of the outer physical world, or of the concrete men with whom he comes into contact, the criticisms above mentioned will have been sufficiently met.

If we pause to consider what the terms subject and object themselves imply, we will find that they are both abstractions from a primary sense-content. The one always implies the other, and it is only in thought that the two can be separated at all. Thought as a relating and limiting activity involves in its very essence abstraction. From this point of view the external physical world is itself an abstraction from sense-experience. It is object to the individual subject who knows it. We must be careful not to

confuse objectivity with materiality. Everything material is objective, but the objective is not exhausted in the material. For instance, when we make the psychic life of others or our own past mental states the "object" of our thought, these immaterial things are as truly objective to us as the external physical world can possibly be. Now in order to distinguish that which is "real" from that which is merely a projection of his own brain, the individual subject is accustomed to appeal to the consensus of his fellow human beings. By accepting that which is reported as objective by all as the "real," hallucination is weeded out and the individual obtains a reliable basis for action. All of these points are in full harmony with our claim to consider the social formation as objective, and to treat it as one of the elements on which the action of the individual depends.

Empirically the objectivity and positive character of social formations will hardly be denied. A law is objective enough to the criminal who violates it or who contemplates its violation. A man deliberating as to whether he shall go into a public bar for a drink of liquor is just as apt to have his decision determined by reference to his code of social propriety as to the physiological condition of his body. A business man finding his success dependent on the adoption of certain dishonorable practices common among his competitors will swing into line despite the dictates of his conscience. These cases do not need multiplication. The influence on the actions of the individual men is plainly enough to be seen.

It is however clear that social formations are by no means taken into account in all the actions of individuals. In actions from impulse and from habit, there is in the nature of the case no such reference. It is only in the class of actions which follow conscious calculations that the objective formation is of importance. But it is just such action, basing as it does in reason, that is distinctive of human beings, and by means of which, as has already been pointed out, the

human group is differentiated from even the highest aggregation of animals. The human being recognizes means as dintinct from ends, and he alone among animals can compare and weigh these means; and make them directly the objects of his activities. In highly developed societies it is only by this process, by consciously recognizing the social formations and adapting himself to them, that the individual can maintain a successful existence.

After what has been said it seems hardly necessary to add that the objectivity which has been posited of social formations does not carry with it in any sense the implication of any initiative or autonomous character. The formation has its effect and is an element for reasoning only so far as it is a part of the knowledge content of the individual man. The difference between it and the external physical world, as far as our purposes go, is simply that it has its effect merely as a representative state, while material objects must at times be considered also in their immediate effects as simple presentations.

Taking these elements,—the impulses, psychic customs and calculations of men, and the content of their knowledge, consisting of the physical world, other individuals and social formations,—we have next to indicate a few of the main forms in which they must be combined to explain the phenomena of social life. In any given problem, only a part of these elements may occur, or be important enough to merit special consideration.

These problems may be divided in the usual way into genetic and static. The static theories seek to explain the social relationships and interactions, under circumstances in which the elements on which the reasoning is based, remain practically unchanged. The genetic theories, on the other hand, seek to show the development of these very elements, and the changes which have been brought about in them in the course of human history. It must be remembered that

this division of the problems of society into genetic and static is a purely logical one, and that it is made only for purposes of convenience in treatment. In a certain sense all social problems may be looked on as genetic, as will appear especially when we glance at the elements which are used in the theories of value. Nevertheless, the distinction is found to be of considerable importance. Let us examine, first of all, the combination of the elements for the explanation of a few typical genetic problems.

We have seen how in small, primary groups, brought together largely by conditions of food-supply and by sexual impulses, the direct interaction of one individual upon another through imitation will produce common habits, or as we have called them customary actions. To explain this process the only elements which we have found it necessary to take into account are impulses, physical nature, and the presence of other individuals. In this way simple language forms are produced; so also primitive religious beliefs, which are to be looked on as a customary interpretation of certain physical phenomena. The same elements will suffice to explain the origin of many of the primitive formations implying division of labor; as simple political institutions and ceremonial of worship, the forerunner of the organized church. It is true that the presence of different groups of men in the same region has undoubtedly the utmost importance for the understanding of even the earliest political institutions, as Gumplowicz has especially emphasized: but, as will appear later, this fact does not make it necessary to assume the group as the unit of reasoning.

Each new individual born or adopted into the group receives by imitation, conscious or unconscious, the customs of the older members. Even after the custom has become quite firmly fixed and well adapted for the ends which it serves, a change in the environment will probably affect it and gradually change its character.

These changes are usually brought about by repeated slight deviations on the part of some of the more independent members of the group; and these deviations, imitated by others, form the basis for the new custom. Sometimes, again, a very firmly fixed customary action will survive on the sudden removal to a different environment, and obtain very different meaning from what it originally had.

It is clear that in some of these processes it has been necessary to assume individuals acting with a more or less perfect, conscious estimation of pleasures and pains; while reaction is also beginning to be made with reference to the formations objectively considered. One stage in the development of the formation has thus served as a stepping-stone on which the members of the society have risen to a higher stage; or one formation has served as stepping-stone in the change to another. To use another figure, the objectified formation has served as the fulcrum on which the lever of human desire has worked to secure a better adjustment to the environment for the future.

In these ways then very complex customs and institutions will gradually be developed. It is usual to put in opposition to one another two forms of the development of institutions; on the one side, spontaneous or organic growth; on the other, deliberate creation by a consciously acting government or populace. We have made little of this distinction in this paper because it is impossible to find any sharp line of demarcation between the two forms of growth. Both conscious volitional action and reliance on custom play a part in the development of every more complicated formation, and it is often impossible in any one case to decide on the share of each element. The main characteristic of the deliberate creation of institutions is probably that many people—in democratic societies, presumably the majority—act together, and ordain that which seems fitting to them. But it is evident that such action itself bases on an institution that is ultimately of "customary" origin; while we have shown

that even in the development of custom, consciously calculating action, though it may be only of a few people at a time, plays a great part. The deliberating action of the members of a modern political majority is only the extension of the deliberating action which was in early societies confined to the few, and the results of which were passed on to the more passive part of the community by means of imitation. The institution on the basis of which the modern majority acts, is similarly only the outcome of a customary formation. A deliberately produced formation, such as a law, has, it is true, usually a sharply defined beginning and end, and in so far differs from the customary formation; but, on the other hand, its character is seen frequently to approximate that of the latter, inasmuch as its results are often far different from what had been planned by those who took part in its creation.

This is not the place to carry out in detail these considerations; but it has been made sufficiently clear how such changes in form of the social interactions and relationships of men must be explained. The elements of explanation must all be based on the characteristics of the minds of individual men. Individuals acting with reference to their total environment, their knowledge of men, and nature, and social organization, furnish us the materials from which we can build up the genetic interpretation of society. Not that the student of society aims primarily to determine how these changes of character in the individual are produced. That is clearly the affair of the psychologist. The sociologist assumes rather such changes as facts through the aid of which he will be enabled to explain the changing character of social life.*

* These considerations make it clear why it is that the emphasis throughout this paper has been on the importance of the individual man's characteristics for the understanding of society, rather than *vice versa*. The whole of the phenomena which we have had under discussion could have been approached equally well from the other point of view, in which the centre of interest is the individual, and society is considered only in so far as it is an important part of the environment affecting its growth. Such a point of view is however taken, as has already been said, rather by the psychologist and the moralist, than by the student of society.

Let us pass now to an equally brief consideration of the elements of investigation as they are combined for the explanation of some of the static problems of society.

Static theories are conceivable which concern themselves with almost any social formation and in almost any stage of society. Besides theories of the development of language and the marriage institution, of the state and of legal enactments, we may have theories of the processes that go on in any given society between the different individuals acting with reference to the given formation. So a theory of thought and its communication between individuals recognizing the same language-formation is possible. The static theory of marriage would trace the effects of the existence of the marriage laws and customs on the actions of individuals, both married and unmarried, taking into account at the same time the physiological characteristics of the individuals and the climatic conditions under which they lived, and also the existence of the other social formations of the same society.

Undoubtedly the most important static theories are those of modern industrial activities. They have concern with the relationships of men, acting partially under the influence of custom, partially by means of careful calculations of increments of pleasure and pain; these actions taking place under definite geographical and climatic conditions, and with reference to definite industrial formations. Some of these formations have been already enumerated. They include organized markets, credit, currency and banking systems, exchange and the transportation system, and business law. In addition to these and many other strictly industrial formations, the wide extent and complexity of our economic activities require us to take into account nearly all of the more important social formations. It is sufficiently evident how much a man's industrial life is affected by the existence of the state, even where it does not primarily conserve economic ends; or by his desire to found a family or to conform to some class spirit or to some demand of fashion or of his

"set" in society, simply for social reasons and where the practice itself has no attraction for him.

It is evident that theories built up from these elements will have validity only in the specific societies or countries in which the particular premises used are found. They will make no pretence of "perpetualism" or "cosmopolitanism." No theories of political economy, however general or universal they may have claimed to be, have been constructed without reference to specific industrial formations. The "absolutism" can consist only in choosing as premises such formations as are common to as many societies as possible; and in so doing the theory evidently moves far away from the actual conditions of any one society.

The phenomena of market values furnish material for one of the main static theories of industrial society. The theories advanced in their explanation base, in accordance with what has just been said, on the existent industrial formations. Each industrial member of society takes these formations consciously into account, especially when he seeks to change or better his condition, and he determines his action with reference to them. The specific wants of the community can be estimated by the business man and taken into account in much the same way.

On the side of the consumer, the goods he desires are determined partly by custom, partly by his conscious estimation of utilities; these factors both being modified to some extent by the amount he is able to expend. On the side of the entrepreneur, conscious calculations have largely replaced customary production. The probable wants of the consumers are estimated in connection with the possibilities of supply under the given physical condition of the territory, and in connection with the probable supply from other producers of the same good. On the side of the laborers custom and calculation play very unequal parts in the different countries and in the different branches of production. While custom leads to a condition in which many individuals can

be lumped together, so to speak, and treated as a whole for the purpose in hand, calculation leads more often to similar types of action in many individuals, and so results in competition. How ever far freedom of competition may have advanced in modern society, it is very clear that a very great part of the activities of men in society still rests on custom, as well in the industrial field as in other departments of social life, and that the conscious calculus of pleasures and pains is by no means the only thing to consider in the interpretation of these activities.

It is by these elements as above described, combined with many other less important ones which cannot be mentioned here, that market valuations and prices are produced in the advanced modern society.*

All the illustrations of the synthesis of the different social elements, which have thus far been given, deal, it will be noticed, with the phenomena that take place inside of a social group. It remains to indicate that even in the interactions between different groups it is by no means necessary to make the groups themselves the units of investigation. Similar conditions excited in different individuals under the same stimulus from members of another group, imitation of these feelings through sympathy, and the transfer of them to children and newcomers are sufficient to account for the apparent action of the group as a unit. Impulse and custom and calculation on the part of individuals are the true elements, not groups of men. The same elements are sufficient to explain a popular uprising in a large modern state; or the declaration of war by one state upon another. In this last

* This does not do violence to the fact that in many parts of the world prices are still themselves matters of direct custom, in which case their discussion would fall under the problems which we have called genetic rather than under the static problems. It is necessary to point out again that this distinction of static and genetic problems is purely one of convenience, and that from a broader point of view all determinations of market values, implying, as they do, changes in the opinions of individuals, have a certain dynamic character. From this point of view all prices determined under the sway of free competition, however fluctuating they be, are themselves, as long as they last, true social formations.

case, the process consists in the creation of common opinion among the populace by imitation and reflection on the part of individuals, and the conscious deliberation by the members of the government with reference both to this public opinion and to the foreign offending society.

We see then that in all departments of social life the main elements to be considered are the actions of men in accordance with custom and those which depend on deliberate calculation. The latter must have, to a great extent, conscious reference to the objectified customs and institutions of the society in which the individual is placed, in short, to social formations. These formations are on the one side social products to be explained; on the other as part of the content of knowledge of the individual, they are themselves elements of further progress. Taken in the former way, we may have for each one a genetic theory, an explanation of its development. Wherever taken consciously into account by the individual and where the phenomena are important, static theories of them are necessary in the sense defined above. From either point of view, by means of the formation or of a group of formations, we are able to mark out a distinct field for a separate social science. Such a science will not be an abstract science of the nature of the pure economics, about which much has been said recently; nor on the other hand will it be merely a descriptive science of social products. It will be in the fullest sense explanatory through a synthesis of the social elements which are grounded ultimately in psychology. It is only through the combined results of many such sciences that we will succeed in advancing on the one side to a better art of social control, on the other, to a more perfect social philosophy; two goals which are in truth much the same, looking but the opposite ways along the stream of time.

ARTHUR F. BENTLEY.

Johns Hopkins University.